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ABSTRACT

John Wood Community College's Open Learning Center (OLC) offers an alternative to traditional classroom approaches using one-to-one instruction, a competency-based learning format, and flexible scheduling. Due to concern over the high attrition rate in OLC courses, a study was conducted to identify the characteristics and variables contributing to successful course completion. The study sample consisted of all students enrolled during fall 1981 in one of four courses (i.e., Introduction to Math, Rhetoric and Composition I, Computer Usage and Impact, and Principles of Accounting I). Student records provided information on 13 non-academic variables (i.e., number of days per week and time of day spent at OLC, student intent, financial aid status, gender, age, time out of high school, and number of semester hours transferred to and completed at the college), and the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale was used to determine students' locus of control. The study found no significant relationship between any of the non-academic variables or locus of control and successful course completion and no significant differences in the locus of control of the OLC students and those in other educational settings. It was concluded that further research was needed to determine the characteristics contributing to successful course completion. (LAL)

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Western Illinois University

A STUDY TO DETERMINE NON-ACADEMIC TRAITS OF A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT IN AN OPEN LEARNING CENTER ENVIRONMENT AT JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Educational Administration 652, Field Problem

Dr. Cay

November 1983

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The subject of attrition has long been the study of many researchers. Many hypotheses have been offered to account for students' dropping out of school at the postsecondary level. Much attention has also been given to identifying characteristics of both successful and unsuccessful students.

When students drop out, both the students and the educational institution are affected. The students may have wasted time, money and energy with no return on their investment. There may also be a negative effect on the student's self-concept.

The educational institution suffers, as well, through loss of tuition, financial aid funds, and in some instances, state and federal funds. Additionally, the credibility of the institution may be affected by students who feel they must withdraw, particularly if they face failure or discouragement.

Some types of learning environments at John Wood Community College have faced a higher attrition rate than others. This project focuses on one such environment, the John Wood Community College Open Learning Center. This

center offers transfer level college courses, occupational courses, and adult basic education courses.

All coursework in the OLC is done on a one-to-one basis with an OLC instructor. Students complete assignments until they feel ready to take the test. If they successfully complete the test, they move on to another course topic; if not, the material is reviewed and the test taken again. Each section must be mastered before the students are allowed to move on. If all topics are not completed by the end of the term in which students are registered, they simply continue into the next term. Thus no grades of less than "C" are assigned -- the courses are "fail-proof." However, regular attendance is required.

Although the OLC is a useful alternative to the traditional classroom due to its flexible scheduling and competency-based learning format, a major problem associated with the OLC is the exceptionally high attrition rate of the students.

A comparison of completers, defined as those who received a final passing grade, was made in four key transfer level courses, delivered in both the traditional classroom environment and in the non-traditional open learning center manner for fall semester, 1981. A summary of this comparison revealed that in Principles of Accounting I the number of completers in the OLC was 5 (35 enrolled) for an attrition rate of 86% at the end of 26 weeks. Attrition in a comparable class taught in the traditional

manner was 23%. Intermediate Algebra in the OLC has an attrition rate of 74% while the comparable course in the traditional delivery system had an attrition rate of 20%. The third course examined was Rhetoric and Composition I. The OLC attrition rate was 67%; the traditional attrition rate was 20%. And the fourth course compared, Computer Usage and Impact, had an attrition rate of 56% in the OLC and 26% in the traditional setting.

JWCC's overall attrition rate has previously been examined, and various methods of dealing with the problem have been devised. Improvement has occurred in retention of the traditional student through better advising, testing and orientation procedures. The overall attrition rate for all courses in both the traditional delivery system and the OLC system has dropped from 25.5% in 1980 to 23.1% in 1982.

Similar activites to those used in the traditional delivery were added to the OLC routine. Before 1979 advising of students in the OLC had been handled by secretaries or the OLC director. A trained (Master's degree in Counseling) counselor was added to the staff to perform the advising and orientation function. More detailed instructions were written and discussed with the students regarding the parameters of each course. The Nelson-Denny Reading Test was used to place students in Rhetoric and Composition, as had always been used in placing students in that same course in the traditional setting. In addition, attendance of the student is carefully monitored and

frequent letters are written by the instructor to the student if lack of attendance becomes a problem.

Perhaps the attrition rate in OLC courses is an indication that traditional remedies may not be applicable to a non-traditional program and that other non-traditional methods must be devised. The purpose of this study is to search for and identify characteristics and variables which may contribute to the satisfactory completion of an OLC course of study. If one or more of these factors can be identified, these factors can be utilized in the screening, advising or teaching procedure to improve retention of OLC students.

Statement of Problem

The JWCC Open Learning Center has a high rate of attrition, and no determination has been made as to variables that influence this attrition. The problem was to identify traits of a successful completer. Once identified, those traits may be evaluated and perhaps strategies can be devised to address the problem of student retention in the OLC courses.

Limitations/Delimitation of Study

This study was limited to John Wood Community College students enrolled in Open Learning Center courses.

The sample consisted of students enrolled during the fall, 1981, term in the following courses: MAT 100 -

Introduction to Mathematics, ENG 102 - Rhetoric and Composition I, CSC 100 - Computer Usage and Impact, and ACC 101 - Principles of Accounting I. Furthermore, the sample did not include students who were also JWCC employees, students for whom variables (see "Variables to be examined") were lacking, and students who dropped during the five day drop/add period.

Definition of Terms

Open Learning Center (OLC): a unit of John Wood Community College, housed within the college administration building, offering open-entry/open-exit competency-based instruction.

Completer: a student in the OLC who completes course requirements and earns a grade of A, B, or C within 26 weeks from date of enrollment and the student in the traditional setting who receives a D or better for a final grade.

Non-Completer: a OLC student who does not fulfill course requirements and withdraws with a W or WP, or who does not complete the course within 26 weeks. A student in the traditional setting who received an F in the course or who withdraws or is withdrawn by the instructor was considered a non-completer.

Sample: Students registered in OLC courses MAT 100 - Introduction to Mathematics, ACC 101 - Principles of Accounting I, ENG 102 - Rhetoric and Composition I, and CSC 100 - Computer Usage and Impact during fall, 1981 term.

Variables to be Examined

The following variables were examined to help define the characteristics of successful completers in OLC courses: starting date; day of the week and time of day chosen by the students to attend class in the OLC; current number of credit hours in which students were enrolled in the OLC; total number of credit hours in OLC courses attempted; students' intent, (defined as the primary goal of a student by the Illinois Community College Board, see Appendix A); whether or not they were receiving any financial aid; gender; age range; total current credit hours enrolled in all centers; length of time out of high school; total completed credit hours; grade received in the course; number of weeks to complete the course; and the degree of internal-external control of successful completers,(as measured by the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale).

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A thorough study of student completions has identified two types of explained variables. One such explainable variable includes the paper inventory test that measures self-concept or locus of control. A second type includes academic variables, such as number of credit hours enrolled and course grades, as well as non-academic variables, such as gender, age, marital status and financial aid.

In a study by Tomala and Behuniak, Jr.[1], the pattern of changes in locus of control for college persisters and dropouts and differences between males and females were measured. This study found that both students completing undergraduate training and students dropping out of their programs became more internally controlled. These results could be expected for persisters, but the same relationship held for the student dropouts as well. Tomala and Behuniak also found that in the early stages of the students' college careers, persisters were significantly more internally controlled than dropouts. Yet, these differences became quite small when comparing the persisters with the dropouts after four years. This pattern indicates that dropouts may suffer a feeling of being out of control immediately after

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[1]Tomala, Gail and Behuniak, Peter, Jr., "A Longitudinal Study of Locus of Control for Male and Female Persisters and Dropouts in Four Year Colleges," a paper presented at the annual meeting of The American Educational Research Association, April, 1981.

their departure from college but that these feelings dissipate over time. The results of their study further indicated that females were more internally controlled than males regardless of college status.

A similar study on self-motivation by Roueche and Mink[2], found that a student in a non-traditional approach in the educational process was expected (a) to adjust to an environment where students pace themselves, (b) to adapt or acquire the necessary skills required to accommodate the non-traditional approach, and (c) to be self-motivated. They believe it is important to understand that students cannot "try" to succeed unless they believe they have some chance of success. The students who believe they can, can. Roueche and Mink believe that a student must develop his or her own motivation, that no teacher can motivate a student. They recommend that more energies should be spent in helping students to help themselves rather than attempting to motivate a student to make a better grade. Indications are that students who are able to learn on their own can be successful in the learning environment.

Another study analyzing indicators of the successful completer was conducted by Warren J. Valine[3]. One of the conclusions of this study was that the students who attained

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[2]Roueche, John E. and Mink, Oscar G., "Toward Personhood Development in the Community College," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, April, 1975.
[3]Valine, Warren J., "Four-Year Follow-Up Study of Underachieving College Freshman," Auborn University, 1969.

senior level generally have a statistically more positive self-concept than those who, for various reasons, dropped out of college. He found it necessary, then, to measure self-concept of incoming students rather than academic variables to determine who has potential to become a successful student.

In determining characteristics of a successful completer, Walter Hunter[4], in his study of performance variables, concluded that "A" students prefer structure (organization and detail) to a greater extent than "C" students. "C" students prefer independence to a greater extent than "B" students. Also included in this study is the conclusion that the "B" students prefer more inanimate content and numerics than do "D" students.

In a similar study, Richard Rasor[5], measured several variables which affect class withdrawal and retention rates. Items surveyed included grading practices, the number of units (credit hours) awarded for successful course completion, and the time and day the course was offered. Of particular interest were the findings related to the time period the class was scheduled. Rasor discovered that there was no significant relationship between the time of day the

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[4]Hunter, Walter E., "Relationships Between Learning Styles, Grades, and Student Ratings of Instruction," Council of North Central Community and Junior Colleges. September, 1979.

[5]Rasor, Richard A., "Correlates of Classroom Retention," American River Junior College, Sacramento, California, May, 1980.

class meets and a passing grade (successful completion). He also concluded that the number of credit hours and grand total hours per week has no significant relationship to successful completion. However, he noted that classes which met for longer hours than a standard three unit course became a predicator of lower completion rate.

In another study of retention, teachers and students were assessed for their preferred cognitive styles. John Keyser[6], tried to match the students' cognitive style of learning to the teacher's individual style. Included in Keyser's mapping assessment was an experimental group. The experimental group was enrolled in a one-hour human psychology course. This course was developed for student orientation. During the orientation course, students were to become aware of their learning style and match that learning style to a similar teacher's style. This awareness was the responsibility of students, and they were to employ this awareness as a survival skill while choosing courses.

Data collected by Keyser's research office revealed that the retention of students who completed this course was much higher than the retention rate of students who did not complete this course.

Review of literature more closely related to the purpose of this project includes a report by C. Yoshioka, University

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[6]Keyser, John S., "Cognitive Mapping: A Retention Strategy that Works," a paper presented at the annual conference of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, March, 1980.

of Hawaii[7]. This study compared first semester G.P.A. of 2.0 or above with variables obtained from a freshman survey. Those variables were: average high school grades, part-time or full-time enrollment status, gender, age at time of first enrollment, current age, marital status, educational objective, and students placement level in Mathematics and English.

Yoshioka's analysis of the data revealed that there was correlation to all of the variables. However, within the variables three produced more significance than the other variables. These were part-time or full-time status, mathmatics placement level, and average high school grades.

The review of literature revealed many measurable variables used in explaining student completions. Although the research findings were was enlightening, the purpose of this study is to determine the characteristics of a completer by examining non-academic/academic variables in an open- entry/open-exit open learning environment. The studies located for this review did not appear significantly applicable to the open-entry/open-exit learning environment at John Wood Community College.

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[7]Yoshioka, C., "Early Identification of the Potential Dropout: An Exploratory Study Based on Fall, 1979 New Students," Office of the Provost Kapiolani Community College University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii. Report 6, July, 1980.

Chapter 3

METHOD OF RESEARCH

Introduction

In order to determine the variables to be used in this study, a memo was sent to all Open Learning Center Instructors. They were asked to identify academic and non-academic traits they felt were related to successful completion of coursework by open learning center students, based upon the instructors' own observations and experience in working with students. (See Appendix B.)

The first phase of this study focused on those non-academic variables identified from the instructor questionnaire. The variables were age, gender, length of time out of high school, day of the week and time of day chosen by the student to attend class, current number of credit hours enrolled in the OLC, total number of credit hours in OLC courses attempted, previous number of OLC hours completed, student intent, whether or not the student was receiving financial aid, total current credit hours enrolled in all courses, total completed credit hours in all courses, grade received in the course selected for the sample and number of weeks to complete the sampled course.

The second phase of the project focused on the student's sense of internal or external locus-of-control, to determine whether the students perceived their lives as externally controlled (I have no control over what happens to me) or

internally controlled (I can control what happens to me) and whether this external or internal control was related to persistence.

These two areas, non-academic variables and internal/external control, were chosen in order to limit the scope of the study and to compare results to those obtained from previous research done in a traditional classroom setting.

Sample Selection

The population used in the portion of this study focusing on non-academic variables consisted of students enrolled in the Open Learning Center courses ACC 101, Principles of Accounting I; CSC 100, Computer Usage and Impact; ENG 102, Rhetoric and Composition I; and MAT 100, Intermediate Algebra for the fall, 1981 semester. Any names of students on the class lists who were also JWCC employees, names of students for whom data were incomplete and names of students who dropped within the five-day drop/add period were deleted from the sample.

An important consideration in choosing the sample of students in the four courses named was to control for variability in the number of completers due to the different methods by which OLC instructors are paid. Some instructors are employed on a salaried basis and some are paid on a student completion-rate basis. The assumption is that instructors paid an annual salary would be more concerned

with the quality of the student's work, whereas the instructor paid on a per student completer basis might not be as objective about quality of a student's work and pass the student with a grade of C or better in order to get credit for a student completer. In order to control for this type of bias, the four courses chosen for this study are taught by instructors who are paid an annual salary.

The student population used in the portion of this study focusing on internal/external control consisted of a sample of students registering in the above named courses for the fall, 1982 semester.

Data Collection

Using the fall, 1981, semester class lists for the four courses mentioned earlier, data were hand recorded for each variable. In addition to the class lists, records used for collection of data included the original student admissions applications, course registration forms and students' permanent records.

Data obtained from the admissions application was age, gender and length of time out of school. Course registration forms provided data about student intent, number of days a week, time of day and current number of semester hours enrolled in both OLC and other JWCC coursework. The student's permanent record card yielded the information about prior number of semester hours of OLC coursework attempted, prior semester hours of OLC coursework

completed, total combined number of semester hours of coursework completed as a JWCC student up to fall, 1981 and total number of semester hours of credit transferred into JWCC.

Students are required to be present in the Open Learning Center a minimum of three hours per week for any of the courses in this study. Many combinations of days of the week and hours of the day may make up that three hours. To facilitate analysis of the data for this variable, the number 1 was assigned to a student who came three hours a day for one day a week, 2 was assigned to a student who spread his/her three hours over two days a week, and 3 was assigned to a student spreading his/her three hours over three days a week.

The time of day a student attended was also given a numerical value: 1 for the hours 8:00 a.m. to noon; 2 for the hours 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m., and 3 for the hours 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

To indicate whether or not students had financial aid a 1 was used to indicate they had some form of financial aid which paid for the course taken and a 2 indicated they paid for the course themselves.

Gender was indicated by using a 1 for female and a 2 for male. Age was broken down into interval data with 1 used to indicate an age range up to 20 years, 2 for ages 21-26, 3 for ages 27-32, 4 for ages 33-38, and a 5 for ages 39 and up. Grades were used only to indicate successful completion

of course, and a 1 was used if the student did in fact complete with a letter grade of A, B, or C. A 2 was used if the student did not complete the course. All other data were recorded as the actual numbers taken from the records used.

Administration of Paper Inventory to Measure Internal or External Control

The Rotter Internal-External Control Scale was chosen to measure locus-of-control. The choice of this instrument was based on the ease with which it could be administered and scored, the short amount of time required for students to complete the inventory and cost factors presented by the college budget. The reason that ease of administration and shortness of time were considered important is related to the nature of many students enrolling in OLC courses. Many are people attempting to fit an OLC course into an otherwise busy schedule of family and/or job responsibilities and perhaps enrollment in additional classes being taught in the traditional classroom. In addition, students enrolling in OLC courses frequently do not fit the traditional idea of a college student and may feel somewhat threatened by long, time consuming pretesting before beginning a class.

The Rotter I-E Control Scale was administered by the Open Learning Center counselor, who is also a member of this research team. The Rotter I-E Scale was administered during the fall, 1982 semester from mid-September through the end

of the year. All students who registered in the four selected courses during this time period were invited to participate in the study. The number in the sample was limited due to some students declining to take the test. Some students were not included because they registered at times other than when the researcher was present so were not given the opportunity to take the test. The most important limiting factor was the time period chosen for administering the tests. The OLC's heavy enrollment period is late August and early September, therefore many potential participants were missed.

Analysis

A correlation was run on data for the non-academic variables using the RSTS/E STAT III Statistical Package adapted from the original publication of the same name by Digital Equipment Corporation.

Scores obtained from use of the Rotter I-E were analyzed by a T-Test using the RSTS/E STAT 11 Package to determine if internal/external control is related to completion of an OLC course.

Chapter 4

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study is to identify traits of successful student completers taking courses in the John Wood Community College Open Learning Center. The study centers on research of non-academic variables and sense of internal or external control of the students to determine if they are related to successful completion of coursework in the OLC. The sample consists of students who were enrolled in four courses during the fall 1981 semester.

An analysis was done for each of the courses used in the study to determine whether there was any correlation between persistence in an Open Learning Center course and a number of non-academic variables. The variables used in the analysis were:

1. Number of days a week students spent in the Open Learning Center
2. Time of day student spent in the Open Learning Center (morning, afternoon, or evening)
3. Number of semester hours of coursework in which enrolled in the OLC during fall, 1981, semester
4. Prior number of semester hours of OLC coursework completed
5. Prior number of semester hours of OLC coursework attempted
6. Student intent
7. Whether or not student is receiving financial aid
8. Gender
9. Age

10. Total number of semester hours in which enrolled in both OLC and traditional classroom during fall, 1981

11. Length of time out of high school

12. Total number of semester hours of credit transferred into JWCC

13. Total number of semester hours of coursework completed at JWCC up to fall, 1981

As the tables on pages 21 and 22 show, no significant relationship was found between successful completion of an OLC course and any of the variables used.

Table one on page 21 shows correlations ranging from -.306 to .233 for the 13 non-academic variables for students enrolled in Accounting 101 and completing the course in 26 weeks or less. The correlation range for those students completing in 40 weeks or less is -2.45 to .231. In table two on page 21 correlation for the 13 variables for students completing Computer Science 100 in 26 or less ranges from .256 to .156. For the forty week or less completion time in Computer Science the correlation ranged from -.181 to .222 for the 13 variables. Table three on page 22 for English 102 completed in 26 weeks or less shows a correlation range of -.158 to .292. For the forty week or less completion, the correlation ranges from -1.28 to .222. The final table on page 22, for successful completion of Mathmatics 100 in 26 weeks or less, shows a correlation range of -.240 to .158. For the forty week or less completion rate, the correlation ranges from -.284 to .267.

In all four courses correlations of successful completion to the non-academic variables shows no significance.

The Rotter I-E Scale was given to a total of 43 students registering during the fall, 1983, term in one or more of the four courses being considered in this research project. The sample of 43 students taking the Rotter was 18.5% of the total number of students enrolled in the OLC courses ACC 101, CSC 100, ENG 102 and MAT 100. The Rotter is a forced choice inventory containing 29 pairs of statements. Six of the pairs are not indicative of internal/external control but are blind items and do not count toward the final raw score. The maximum score of 23 indicates the extreme of a sense of external control, 0 indicates the strongest sense of internal control.

Raw scores for students were determined by counting the number of external control choices marked by each student. The higher the number of external control choices made, the greater the students feel they are controlled by external factors, and the lower the number, the more internally controlled.

The mean raw score on the Rotter is 8.29. The 43 JWCC Open Learning students tested with the Rotter averaged 8.42, which is close to the mean raw score. Overall, they seem no less or no more externally controlled than students in other types of educational settings.

Using the STAT 11 package, a T-test was run to see if there were any significant difference between the means for the completers and the non-completers. A T-score of -.66465 with a DF of 41 shows there is no significant difference at the .05 probability level in internal/external control among the students who complete an Open Learning Center course and those who do not.

Table five summarizes the statistical information obtained from the comparison of completers and non-completers.

TABLE 5
Summary of Descriptive Statistics for
Completers/Non-completers taking the
Rotter I-E Control Inventory

	N	MEAN	SD	Standard Error
Completers	17	7.88	4.7022	1.1404
Non-completers	26	8.77	3.983	.7811

A mean raw score of 7.88 on The Rotter I-E Control Inventory was obtained for the 17 students successfully completing an OLC course. The standard deviation was 4.7022 and for this group the standard error was 1.1404. The 26 non-completers in the study had a mean raw score on The Rotter I-E of 8.77 with a standard deviation of 3.983 and standard error of .7811.

Although the T-test did not show any significant difference between the means for completers and non-completers for internal/exeternal control, some interesting facts were noted about the means for completers and non-completers in the individual courses. Table 6 summarizes the Rotter I-E raw score means in each of the four courses for completers and non-completers.

TABLE 6
Rotter I-E Means for
Completers/Non-completers by Course

	ACC 101		CSC 100		ENG 102		MAT 100	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
Completers	4	6.0	4	7.25	3	11.0	6	8.0
Non-Completers	8	9.5	10	8.4	5	9.6	3	6.7

Surprisingly, the mean raw scores of 9.6 for ENG 102 and 6.7 for MAT 100 for non-completers were lower than the means of 11.0 and 8.0 for the completers in these two courses. This could be due to the small sample size rather than any internal control factor. The results, however, are interesting and suggest to the researchers they examine a larger sample to see if similar results are obtained.

In contrast, the mean raw scores of 6.0 for completers in ACC 101 and 7.25 in CSC were lower than the mean scores of 9.5 and 8.4 for the non-completers. Completers in the ACC 101 course had the lowest raw score mean while non-completers in MAT 100 had the lowest raw score mean.

The variances in the raw score means of the completers and non-completers in the four courses researched suggest that the study be expanded to test a larger sample to determine if similar results are obtained or whether the results in this study were obtained by chance. Similar results would indicate the researchers need to look for explanations other than internal/external control alone.

The analysis of the variables listed on page did not show any significant relationship to successful completion of an Open Learning Center course within a period of either 26 weeks or 40 weeks.

TABLE 1

Correlation of Non-academic Variables to Successful Completion of ACC 101 - Principles of Accounting I

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13
26 WEEKS	₹098	₹084	₹306	.126	.161	.180	.110	.233	₹158	₹106	.087	.081	₹165
40 WEEKS	₹032	₹245	₹118	.182	.231	₹054	₹006	₹082	₹204	.047	₹068	₹075	.089

V = Variable
N = 35

TABLE 2

Correlation of Non-academic Variables to Successful Completion of CSC 100 - Computer Usage & Impact

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13
26 WEEKS	.156	.040	₹150	.133	.105	.113	.086	₹133	.122	₹256	.025	₹060	₹100
40 WEEKS	.188	.066	₹070	.220	.156	.060	.137	₹030	.229	₹216	.050	.051	₹026

V = Variable
N = 59

23.

TABLE 3

Correlation of Non-academic Variables to Successful Completion of ENG 102 - Rhetoric & Composition I

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13
26 WEEKS	₹031	.061	.211	.188	.222	₹181	.097	.198	.039	₹129	₹010	₹158	.018
40 WEEKS	.006	.074	.228	.173	.220	₹128	.067	.292	₹004	₹249	₹069	₹126	.024

V = Variable
N = 61

TABLE 4

Correlation of Non-academic Variables to Successful Completion of MAT 100 - Elementary Algebra

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	V12	V13
26 WEEKS	₹044	₹217	.158	₹005	.116	₹136	₹240	₹150	.014	₹225	₹136	₹083	₹030
40 WEEKS	.130	₹206	.002	₹105	₹045	.025	.070	₹021	.267	₹284	.040	.138	₹147

V = Variable
N = 35

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Attrition of students enrolled in Open Learning Center courses at John Wood Community College is higher than the attrition rate for JWCC students enrolled in courses taught in the traditional classroom environment. The purpose of this study was to attempt to identify those non-academic variables of a student which would contribute to success in completing an OLC course, so that JWCC counselors could properly advise students.

Thirteen non-academic variables were examined in relation to successful completion of four OLC courses, Principles of Accounting I, Intermediate Algebra, Rhetoric and Composition I, and Computer Usage and Impact. The variables examined were starting date, day of the week and time of day chosen by the students to attend class in the OLC, current number of credit hours in which students were enrolled in the OLC, total number of credit hours in OLC courses attempted; students' intent (primary goal of the student), whether or not the student were receiving financial aid, gender of the students, age, total current credit hours enrolled in all centers, length of time out of high school, total completed credit hours; grade received in the OLC course: number of weeks the students took to complete the course; and the degree of internal or external control; of successful completers (as measured by the Rotter Internal-External Control Scale).

There proved to be no significant relationship between any of the thirteen variables examined and successful completion of the OLC courses.

The results of this study suggests that there are some variables affecting the successful completion of courses in the Open Learning Center which have not been identified that may have a more significant effect than the variables used in this study. The perceptions of the instructors as to which factors affect the possibility of successful completion were proved not to have much significance when analyzed against actual completion.

Scores on the ACT or SAT and class rank might have proven to be good predictors. However, these data were not available for enough of the students in the four courses to be useful.

The students' sense of being in control or not in control of their lives did not prove to be a possible predictor for success. However, the sample of students completing the Rotter I-E Scale was fairly small. A larger sample may produce a more significant relationship with completion of a course.

Research done by Nisbet, Ruble and Schurr at Ball State University, published in the May, 1982, Journal of College Student Personnel entitled "Predictors of Academic Success with High Risk College Students,"[1] suggests

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[1]Nisbet, Janice, Ruble, Virgil, and Schurr, K. Terry. (Footnote continued)

that the use of the Myers-Briggs Type and the Effective Study Test might be one of the next avenues to pursue in identifying the factors that determine successful completion of courses in the OLC. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator measures personality dispositions and interests based on Jung's theory of types, in four bi-polar aspects of personality. Subjects are classified as one of two types on each of the four scales: Introversion-Extroversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, and Judgment-Perceptive.[2] The Effective Study Test, developed by William F. Brown is a 125 item paper and pencil true-false test assessing students knowledge of effective study methods. The test measures five areas: reality orientation, study organization, reading behavior, writing behavior and examination behavior and yields a total score for study effectiveness.[3]

It may be necessary to examine the mode of delivery of the learning material, since some courses in the OLC are delivered primarily by printed materials while other courses have more emphasis on television or tape delivery, although all require regular specific contact with an instructor.

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[1](continued)
"Predictors of Academic Success with High Risk College Students," Journal of College Student Personnel, Falls Church, VA, May, 1982.

[2]Myers, Isabel Biggs, and Biggs, Katherine C., Myers-Biggs Type Indicators, Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc., Palo Alto, California.

[3]Brown, William F., Effective Study Test, Effective Study Materials, San Marcos, Texas.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT INTENT

Student Intent as defined in the Illinois Community College Board Management Information Systems manual is "the primary goal of a student and is coded as follows:

1. To prepare for new or first occupational career
2. To improve present occupational skills
3. To explore courses to decide on a career
4. To prepare for transfer to a four-year college or university
5. To remedy basic skill deficiencies
6. To pursue non-career personal interests
7. To prepare for high school diploma equivalency test
8. Other or unknown"

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APPENDIX B

MEMO TO INSTRUCTORS

PHONE: 217-224-6500

JOHN WOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
1919 NORTH 18TH STREET
QUINCY, ILLINOIS 62301

MEMO

TO: OLC Staff

FROM: Steve Prater

RE: Graduate course

Several staff members of JWCC are enrolled in a graduate course through WIU. Our research project is to find out if there are any criteria that could determine a student's successful completion of an OLC course. Successful completion is defined as a student who earns a grade of A, B, C.

We need your help! Please jot down criteria you think are important for successful completion of courses. Consider some of your favorite students--past and present--characteristics they might have possessed.

Here are some suggestions:

High School grades
Employed full-time/part-time
Age
Male/Female
Teacher's good looks

Please jot down some of your suggestions below and return to me by April 29, 1982.

Remember Grandpa Prater's Law:
A university is a place where men of principle outnumber men of honor.

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